

WASC 600

On Her Majesty's Service

WASC 600

WASC 600

Ministry ERDE gates
opened to 2,000 folk.

Chestnut and Waltham
Weekly Telegraph

Friday June 21 1968.

Ministry E.R.D.E. gates opened to 2,000 folk

Visitors see work at top-secret premises

OVER 2,000 representatives from industry, the Civil Service, and the press toured the Explosives Research and Development Establishment at Waltham Abbey last week to see the latest developments in propellants, explosives, and high-strength materials.

The open day was the first the establishment had held since it switched from explosives to general research in 1945.

All the visitors at the open days were impressed by the various demonstrations and displays which had been arranged on the 550-acre site that stretches for about two miles from north at Powdermill Lane, off Highbridge Street, to south at Quinton Hill, on the Sewardstone Road

Surprised

Many visitors were surprised by the amount of history there is in the establishment, for

gunpowder was first made on the site at Powdermill Lane during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

During the 17th and 18th centuries the narrow waterway, which winds its way through the heart of the establishment, was used for both transport and power.

But things have changed — and with a bang! Top secret work, in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence, is now carried out at Waltham Abbey, and research into propellants, explosives and extremely strong materials continues apace.

The work of the ministry is now extremely complex and diversified, so that one aspect of research is not concentrated upon at the exclusion of others.

Propellants

Half the work concerns propellants for rockets, a third on explosives to put into the rockets, and the remainder on non-metallic materials.

In this last field of research the establishment at Waltham Abbey is ahead of anybody else in the world in developing a "whisker" material, which is one of high strength, yet lighter and more durable than anything produced before.

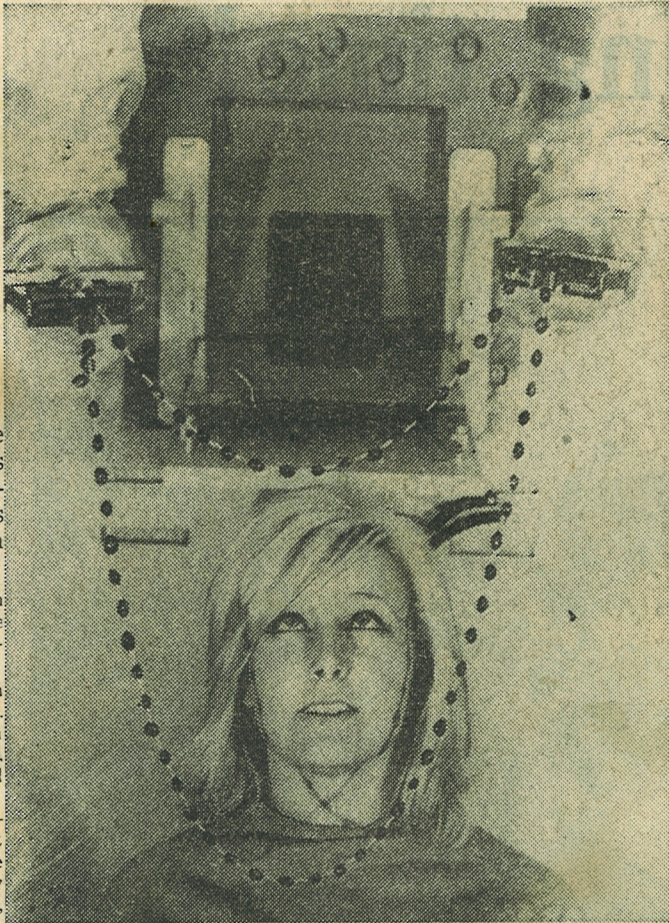
Among the other work which concerns the 900 workers is high-speed photography, sealants and adhesives, heat transfer and the study of noise.

A major part of the work of the chemical branch is developing processes in the laboratory and then persuading industrialists and manufacturers to adopt these new processes and make existing articles cheaper.

Model railway

One of the interesting gadgets the establishment has is a "model railway," which ferries extremely dangerous and explosive materials into a building where they are mixed and stirred. Nobody is allowed in because of the dangerous nature of the experiments.

The establishment have not



had an accident in the last few years, and their record is better than that of the chemical industry generally.

There were many interesting exhibits on show. One of them was the high-strength material which is made by reinforcing metals and plastics with needle crystals, or "whiskers."

Another of the 38 exhibits was the solid propellants used for such devices as ejector seats and line-throwing rockets.

On the site there are 250 buildings, and there is an extensive sports and social club at the establishment. Among the

AN unusual test of just what a master-slave manipulator can do. Usually this machine, which is operated by remote control, transfers highly explosive properties, but on this occasion it is merely putting a string of beads around one of the establishments pretty workers.

other sports that are played are tennis, cricket, football, croquet, billiards and sailing.

E.R.D.E. really did put on a fine show for all the people who visited the establishment.